

FISCAL MATTERS

Working Together to Balance the Budget & Cut Spending

The 2010 legislative session began with the state facing a projected deficit of more than \$1.2 billion for the current two-year budget. Despite the daunting task of closing the deficit, we were able to work together in a bipartisan fashion with the governor to balance the budget. We did it without raising taxes or cutting municipal aid. Instead, we cut state spending by hundreds of millions of dollars, reduced borrowing and worked hard to maximize federal funding.



I'm also pleased that we were able to protect critical investments in education, job training and health care. We worked hard to:

- ▶ Provide adequate funding for trade programs at our technical high schools
- ▶ Reduce co-payments in the Home Care Program for Elders, which helps seniors stay in their homes
- ▶ Reopen enrollment in the Alzheimer's Respite Care Program
- ▶ Take aggressive action to cut \$422 million in previously approved projects this year—bringing us safely under the bonding cap while preserving credit and helping to control future debt

Connecticut's fiscal challenges aren't over, but by reducing borrowing and cutting spending now we're better positioned for the future.

Helping Seniors

We passed several laws affecting seniors this session including one that protects them from scam artists. A new law protects the privacy of those who participate in senior center programming by exempting personal information from the Freedom of Information (FOI) laws. This means that information—including names, addresses and telephone numbers—won't be available to the public, and perhaps more importantly, to scam artists.



Listening to the concerns of small-business owner Joan Siebert of Meriden Travel.

Dear Neighbor,

Everywhere I go constituents tell me the same thing: they want state government to focus on growing jobs, improving education and balancing the budget. I got the message.

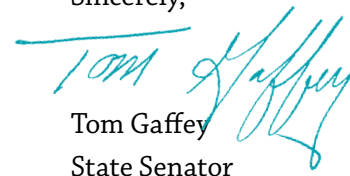
This session we worked with Governor Rell to pass a historic, bipartisan jobs bill. The initiative helps businesses get access to the capital and credit that they need to thrive. We also made Connecticut an easier place to do business by cutting back on bureaucratic red tape and streamlining the regulatory process.

We tackled the budget deficit the same way. By working together, we balanced the budget without raising taxes or cutting municipal aid. Instead, we made significant cuts to state spending, maximized federal aid and reduced borrowing.

Finally, we passed the most comprehensive education reforms in the state's history that strengthens standards and increases transparency and accountability in student, teacher and school performance.

As always, I look forward to hearing from you as Connecticut continues on the road to recovery.

Sincerely,


Tom Gaffey
State Senator



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State Senator
Tom Gaffey

Legislative Office Building, Room 3100, Hartford, CT 06106-1591
www.SenatorGaffey.cga.ct.gov Gaffey@senatedems.ct.gov
860-240-0425 1-800-842-1420

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SENATOR **Tom Gaffey**

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EDUCATION

Standing Up For Vocational-Technical Schools

Vo-tech graduates greatly add to a well-trained, highly qualified workforce. That's why I worked hard on legislation to help reform the system and ensure that it has adequate resources. For too long the students enrolled in vo-tech schools have endured understaffing, shortages of classroom and shop supplies, unsafe buses and virtually no budgetary oversight. The new law will bring increased transparency to vo-tech budgeting and heightened sensitivity to the needs of these schools.

Improving Education in Connecticut

Evidence has been mounting that Connecticut needs to seriously reform public education. To meet that challenge, we approved a landmark education bill that uses technology to track students' academic growth, creates new teacher accountability standards, strengthens high school curricula and provides options to fix failing schools. These bold reforms will help us close the achievement gap and ensure that our graduates can compete in the global economy.



I had the pleasure to speak when Governor Rell signed into law the package of education reforms that I championed.

When in Doubt, Sit it Out

Research indicates that 40 percent of high school athletes who suffer a concussion return to play too soon. A new law, often called "When in Doubt, Sit it Out," will help protect student-athletes by requiring those with suspected concussions to sit out



Announcing this legislation with Senate Majority Leader Martin Looney.

the remainder of same-day play and then receive medical clearance before playing again. The law also requires comprehensive training for coaches and staff so they can recognize the symptoms of a concussion and take action.

GROWING JOBS

Connecticut's Landmark Jobs Bill

There was no greater priority this legislative session than helping Connecticut create high-quality jobs. We worked with Governor Rell to do just that. Some economists call our landmark bipartisan jobs bill the most important jobs initiative that the General Assembly has ever considered.

Provisions of the new law include:

- ▶ Loans and lines of credit for small businesses to help fund expansions, additional hires or new equipment
- ▶ Sales-tax exemptions for machinery, supplies and fuel used in renewable energy industries
- ▶ Loan reimbursements and training grants for education and careers in green technology, life sciences and health information technology
- ▶ Pre-seed financing and technical services to businesses developing innovative concepts
- ▶ Tax credits for angel investments in bioscience, photonics, information technology and green technology businesses



I was joined by our Senate President Don Williams, House Speaker Chris Donovan and local small businesspeople at Paul's Courtyard Cafe in downtown Meriden to promote our jobs plan aimed at supporting the needs of small businesses.

Honoring Veterans, Active-Duty Personnel and Their Families

The General Assembly continued its efforts to support veterans, active-duty personnel and their families. I'm proud that with my support, we were able to pass laws that:

- ▶ Extend the expiration date of driver's licenses for active-duty service members serving out of state
- ▶ Provide credit or an exemption toward the requirements of a professional license or certificate for members of the armed forces who received substantively similar training during their military service
- ▶ Honor Vietnam veterans by proclaiming March 30th of each year as "Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day." The date was chosen because it commemorates the return home of the last members of the armed forces who served in Vietnam.



Renewed Efforts to Keep People in Their Homes

The national housing crisis that started in 2008 continues to impact Connecticut. Thankfully, the state's landmark foreclosure mediation program has helped to keep 3,300 homeowners in their homes. The success of the program convinced the General Assembly and Governor Rell that it must be extended until 2012. Preventing foreclosures is not only good for the homeowners, it also improves property values, reduces blight and helps to control crime.



Resources and Links

Follow links to special pages from www.senatedems.ct.gov:

- ▶ Resources for Jobseekers
- ▶ Protecting Homeowners, Preventing Foreclosures
- ▶ Veterans' Guide
- ▶ Health Care Programs in Connecticut
- ▶ A Guide to the State Budget